

REMARKS

Initially, Applicant would like to express his appreciation to the Examiner for the detailed Official Action provided, for the acknowledgment of Applicant's Information Disclosure Statements by return of the Forms PTO-1449, and for the acknowledgment of Applicant's Claim for Priority and receipt of the certified copies of the priority documents in the Official Action.

Upon entry of the above amendments, claims 1, 2, 25 and 26 will have been amended. Claims 1-31 are currently pending. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the outstanding rejections, and allowance of all the claims pending in the present application.

Applicant notes that claims 2 and 26 have been rewritten into independent form. Further, claims 1 and 25 have been amended to remove "an extended tubular portion configured to hold the water trapping zone of the wire harness" (which is recited in claims 2 and 26).

On pages 2-9 of the Official Action, claims 1-31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by SATO (U.S. Patent No. 6,525,269).

Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection of claims 1-31 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b).

As an initial matter, Applicant submits that SATO does not qualify as prior art under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) based upon its issue date of February 25, 2003. Applicant notes that such issue date is not more than a year before the November 26, 2003 filing date of the present application. Accordingly, SATO does not qualify as prior art under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b).

Applicant notes that SATO appears to disclose a grommet 10 including a tubular portion 11 connected to a conical portion 13 via a connection portion 12 (note Fig. 4 and column 2, lines 16-20). Further, the grommet 10 includes a groove 15d which engages a through-hole formed in a body panel 9 (note column 2, lines 29-35).

Applicant notes that each of independent claims 1, 2, 25 and 26 recite, inter alia, "funnel shaped portion having a generally conical wall with external and internal generally conical faces and a flared end, the external generally conical face comprising a plurality of funnel ribs".

Applicant submits that SATO lacks any disclosure of a funnel shaped portion having *a plurality of funnel ribs on an external face thereof*. In this regard, Applicant notes that the ribs 11c in SATO are located on an *inner* surface 11b of the *tubular portion* 11 (note Fig. 4 and column 2, lines 36-40). Accordingly, it is clear that the *inner* ribs 11c are not located on conical portion 13, much less on *external face* of conical portion 13. The Examiner's attention is directed to funnel ribs 13 disclosed in the present application.

Applicant notes that each of independent claims 1 and 25 recite, inter alia, "funnel shaped portion comprises a device to improve flexibility of and/or space availability for the wire harness when mounted, including one of: a structural configuration allowing the length of said grommet along said longitudinal axis of said funnel shaped portion to be reduced, such that the wire harness can be wired substantially alongside the body panel; and a circular space between said plurality of funnel ribs near said circular joint section and said tubular portion".

Applicant submits that SATO lacks any disclosure of a structural configuration allowing the length of the grommet 10 along the longitudinal axis of the conical portion 13 to be reduced. In this regard, Applicant submits that there is no disclosure of such a structural configuration in SATO at "figure 4 to the left of reference 11a" or at "col. 2, lines 36-37" (as indicated by the Examiner). Applicant further submits that SATO lacks any disclosure of a circular space between a plurality of funnel ribs near the connection portion 12 and tubular portion 11. In this regard, Applicant submits that ribs 11c cannot be characterized as the "funnel ribs" recited in the claims (as explained in detail above), and that thin-walled portion 15c cannot be characterized as the "circular joint section" recited in the claims (since it is clearly not located between tubular portion 11 and conical portion 13).

Applicant notes that each of independent claims 2 and 26 recite, inter alia, "funnel shaped portion comprises a device to improve flexibility of and/or space availability for the wire harness when mounted, including an extended tubular portion configured to hold the water trapping zone of the wire harness, wherein said extended tubular portion extends from said circular joint section toward the inside of said funnel shaped portion".

Applicant submits that SATO lacks any disclosure of an extended tubular portion extending from a circular joint section toward the inside of a funnel shaped portion. In this regard, Applicant submits that SATO does not include any tubular portion extending from the connection portion 12 inside of the conical portion 13. Applicant notes that tube portions 16, 17 do not extend from connection portion 12, but instead extend through conical wall 13 (note Fig. 1 and column 2, lines 50-54). Applicant further submits that envelope 18 does not extend into conical portion 13, and that thin-walled portion 15c cannot be characterized as the "circular joint section" recited in the claims (since it is clearly not located between tubular portion 11 and conical portion 13).

Accordingly, for at least the above-noted reasons, Applicant submits that SATO does not disclose the invention as recited in independent claims 1, 2, 25 and 26.

Applicant also submits that dependent claims 3-24 and 27-31, which are at least patentable due to their respective dependencies from claims 1, 2, 25 and 26, for the reasons noted above, recite additional features of the invention and are also separately

patentable over the prior art of record. For example, Applicant submits that SATO lacks any disclosure of at least the following features of the dependent claims:

"said extended tubular portion comprises a cylindrical wall and an end section distal from said circular joint section, and wherein the thickness of said cylindrical wall of said extended tubular portion increases from said end section to said circular joint section"

(claim 3);

"said extended tubular portion has an external cylindrical face which comprises anti-tear-off ribs extending along the longitudinal direction thereof and joined to said conical wall of said funnel-shaped portion" (claim 5);

"said structural configuration has a length L along said longitudinal axis from said groove base of said funnel shaped portion to said circular joint section thereof, and a diameter D in a plane normal to said longitudinal axis and including said groove base, and wherein the ratio of L : D is in the range of approximately 1:5 to 1:3" (claims 6 and 27); and

"said plurality of funnel ribs have first end sections adjacent said circular joint section and second end sections, and radiate in multiple directions from said first end sections on said external conical face of said funnel-shaped portion, and wherein said first end sections form a circular space around said tubular portion, such that said tubular portion can be flexed independently from said plurality of funnel ribs" (claims 8, 21 and 28).

P24520.A03

Applicant respectfully submits that the rejection of claims 1-31 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) is improper at least for each and certainly for all of the above-noted reasons. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection, and an early indication of the allowance of these claims.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Entry and consideration of the present amendment, reconsideration of the outstanding Official Action, and allowance of the present application and all of the claims therein are respectfully requested and now believed to be appropriate.

Applicant has made a sincere effort to place the present application in condition for allowance and believes that he has now done so.

Any amendments to the claims that have been made in this amendment, which do not narrow the scope of the claims, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered cosmetic in nature, and to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should there be any questions or comments, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
Tsutomu SAKATA



Reg. No. 48,214

Bruce H. Bernstein
Reg. No. 29,027

September 14, 2004
GREENBLUM & BERNSTEIN, P.L.C.
1950 Roland Clarke Place
Reston, VA 20191
(703) 716-1191